A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN

SPRING-GARDEN CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1795.

SERMON,

PREACHED IN

SPRING-GARDEN CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1735.

If with preceding.

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THE AGE OF UNBELIEF,
A SECOND PART TO THE MAN OF SIN.

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SPRING-GARDEN CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1795.

BY WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON, N° 62. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD:

AND SOLD BY ROBINSONS, PATER-NOSTER-ROW; WALTER, CHARING-CROSS; DEIGHTON, HOLBORN; KEYMER, COLCHESTER; AND STANES, CHELMSFORD.

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A

SERMON, &c.

LUKE xviii. 8.

When the Son of man cometh ſhall he find faith on the earth?

WHEN the Son of man dwelt among us, *faith* was the firſt thing he looked for in thoſe with whom he converſed: and if it was not found, his miſſion, to ſuch perſons, was without effect. At his ſecond coming, he will be looking for the ſame; but the text gives us little hope that he will find it. The words do not poſitively aſſert, that no faith ſhall then be left, but that the finding of it

ſhall be queſtionable: it ſhall be ſo far loſt, that the inſtances in which it is found ſhall be few and rare. With this the words of St. Paul agree; who teaches us, that *in the laſt days perilous times* ſhould *come*; 2 Tim. iii. 1. that the truth ſhould be reſiſted by men, as Moſes was reſiſted by the perverſe unbelieving magicians of Egypt, *Jannes* and *Jambres*, and that they ſhould become, as thoſe men were, *reprobate concerning the faith*. v. 8. This character of the laſt age of the world falls in with another equally remarkable; I mean the appearance of the *man of ſin*: though it may well be ſuſpected, that both theſe characters of the time are reducible to one: for the man of ſin ariſes out of the Chriſtian faith, and raiſes himſelf upon the ruins of it; as the worm that deſtroys the fruit, is bred within it *. That the depravity foretold in the Scripture, is the depravity of Chriſtians, there can be no doubt; the prediction concerning it being thus worded—*the ſpirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the faith*, &c. 1 Tim. iv. 1. The corruption, therefore, foretold, is a departure from the faith; and in that we may expect to ſee ſomething much worſe

* See *a Sermon on the Man of Sin*, the third edition of which is ſold by Rivingtons, St. Paul's Church-yard.

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than the corruption of uninformed ſavage nature. An apoſtate from truth adds *perfidy* to his wickedneſs: he is in darkneſs, becauſe he has *put out* the light; and can offend with that blaſphemy againſt heaven, which is not in the power of an ignorant unbeliever.

It is not my deſign, however, to diſplay his wickedneſs, but rather to ſhew how truly the text has pointed out the root and cauſe of it in a ſingle word; in order to which it muſt firſt be ſhewed what Faith is, and what place it holds in the Chriſtian religion. Of this it is ſo conſiderable a part, and ſo eſſential to all the reſt, that it is frequently put for the whole: for what does the Apoſtle mean by departing from the *faith*, but departing from *Chriſtianity?* and where he ſpeaks of the *word of faith*, what does he intend, but the preaching of the *whole Goſpel?* and the Goſpel is called the word of faith, becauſe faith only can receive what it delivers. The inviſible things of God and of a ſpiritual world muſt be *told* to us; for we can neither ſee them nor know them: and faith receives the *teſtimony* on which they are revealed. Things inviſible can have no evidence but that of the faith which believes them: and

if the witneſs of them be from God, then is God the object of our faith: and if we live and act in conſequence of that faith, then our works are wrought in God; and they are accepted, not for what is done, but for the faith with which it is done. He that does not receive the witneſs of God, makes God a *liar*; and of ſuch a perſon it will ever be true, that his works, however ſpecious they may appear, will be the works of oppoſition and pride, and have the nature of ſin. As a *branch cannot bear grapes, unleſs it abide in the vine*, John xv. 4. no good work can be produced but in the life and faith of the Goſpel. In all the works of faith, God is the immediate object: in all other works he has no ſhare, and he hath promiſed no reward. He owes no man any thing; but he accepts and *rewards* every thing in thoſe that believe in, *and diligently ſeek* him. Heb. xi. 6. He called Abraham from *his country*, and from *his kindred*, and from *his father's houſe*, Gen. xii. 1. and he went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. but readily obeying ſuch commands, as he could not thoroughly comprehend; he believed God, and it was imputed to him or accounted for righteouſneſs, and he is propoſed as a pattern to all believers. There is,

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ſtrictly ſpeaking, no ſuch thing as *righteouſneſs* in the world (*there is none righteous no not one*, Rom. x. 3.) but the act of faith is *accounted* for it, becauſe it ſhews a love and friendſhip to God; and it is that only which he regards. With faith, a man ſees every thing, he receives every thing, he is content with every thing, he loves every thing, that comes from God: without faith, he ſees nothing, he receives nothing, he is diſcontented with every thing, he hates every thing, if God has any ſhare in it. Though a matter be inconteſtably proved, even to the ſenſes, it makes no difference; it is not received, unleſs there be in the heart that principle, which believes God on his own teſtimony.

The relations of things that are ſeen, may be proved and underſtood by the natural reaſon of man: but the relations between man and the things which are not ſeen, and the relations of thoſe things between themſelves, can be underſtood only by *faith*: they muſt be received on *teſtimony*, or not at all. If we wiſh to ſee a reaſon, why faith is ſo highly accounted of in the ſight of God, we may take this one inſtead of all the reſt. Virtue may be practiſed on worldly motives; and being

only between man and man, the moſt ſpecious virtue may be practiſed in hypocriſy, and be good for nothing: but faith being between man and God, on whom it is not poſſible for us to impoſe, there can be no ſuch thing as an hypocritical faith in God. But when faith is eſtabliſhed, then virtue comes in well: and therefore we are bid to *add* to our faith *virtue*. In ſhort, there can be no duty to God, but when it is done to God, *as to the Lord and not unto men:* Epheſ. vi. 7. but God being inviſible, nothing can be done as to him, but in faith. And farther, as nothing can be done towards God, nothing can be received from him but by faith. The light is without its power to the man that has no eye: no gift can be offered to him that has no hand to take it. Of the ſpirit of man faith is the eye and the hand, which ſome men have, and ſome have not; *all men have not faith*, 2 Theſſ. iii. 2. How did it happen, when mercy went forth to all, that one ſick man was cured, and another was not cured; but that the one *had faith to be healed*, and the other had not? No mighty work could be wrought, even by Omnipotence itſelf, where men had no faith to be wrought upon. Therefore faith gains all, and unbe-

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lief loſes all. The Iſraelites in the wilderneſs fell ſhort of Canaan, becauſe of their *unbelief:* it is true, they were guilty of many acts of ingratitude and diſobedience: but the whole is laid to their want of faith: this was the cauſe of all: and ſo it is in every other man, with whom *God is not well pleaſed*; for *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him.* Heb. xi. 6. And while faith is the root of all good, it is the only remedy againſt all the evils of life; it gives *patience*, and is the *victory that overcometh the world.* When the ſtorm ariſes, and the waves toſs themſelves, it knows that Chriſt is with it in the ſhip: it levels all mankind, by making the gifts of the poor equal to thoſe of the rich: it performs what human ſtrength cannot accompliſh; *all things are poſſible to him that believeth.* Mar. ix. 23.

I have ſaid thus much to convince you, that in all the tranſactions betwixt man and God, faith is every thing: and that without it, the name of Chriſtianity may remain, but the thing is loſt.

We are now to aſk, what is the preſent ſtate of faith in the Chriſtian world? But

for this inquiry we ſhall not be well prepared, unleſs we attend firſt to a plain diſtinction, which is of the utmoſt importance in our preſent ſubject. When we ſpeak of *reaſon*, we mean the *wiſdom of man*; and I know of none who will not give me leave thus to define it: but by the Goſpel, we mean the *word of faith*, or the *wiſdom of God*. Between theſe two there is an eſſential difference; and the Scripture aſſures us in the plaineſt language, that, ever ſince the entrance of ſin, there has been an oppoſition. The manner in which God has thought proper to ſave mankind, is not approved by the wiſdom of man. It is ſo contrary to his thoughts, and ſo mortifying to his wiſhes, that the preaching of it, being taken for fooliſhneſs, was ſeconded by the force of miracles; and even theſe were often found inſufficient to make men receive it. And when it is admitted, it will always be in danger from the wiſdom of man. There are in the world two intereſts, the human intereſt and the divine intereſt; and they can no more prevail both at once, than any other two parties in oppoſition. The one party rejoices to own, that man is wiſe *with* the word of God; the

the other boaſts that man is wiſe *without* the word of God. The one raiſes high thoughts and imaginations, as ſo many *ſtrong holds* and fortifications of human wiſdom: the other is *mighty through God to the pulling them* all *down*, 2 Cor. x. 4. that God alone may be exalted: what the one builds, the other demoliſhes. Take *faith* and *reaſon* for the wiſdom of God and the wiſdom of man, in which ſenſe I have uſed them, and the oppoſition between them is undeniable: if that, then, be true, which a fooliſh man hath ſaid, that the preſent age is the *age of reaſon*; then it muſt follow, that it is not the *age of faith*; which is, indeed, what he means; and then our point is proved without farther trouble. In ſuch perſons as himſelf and his friends, the aſſertion is true in its fulleſt ſenſe: reaſon is triumphant over faith; that is, man has prevailed againſt God. And I wiſh, we could ſtop here; but it is our duty to examine, how far faith is decaying in better people, and on what principles? The attempt, I well know, is critical and dangerous; and, to ſome perſons, I doubt not, it will give offence. But this we are not to regard; for there never yet was the time or place, when good could be done to

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ſeme without offence given to others. It was the fate of the Goſpel, and of Chriſt the author of it. When the Apoſtles preached the Goſpel at Jeruſalem, "ſay no more about it," ſaid the Jews: and the Devils ſaid to their Maſter, "why art thou come to torment us?" As if his deſign, which was to ſave the world, had been only to torment them. Such conſiderations as theſe ought not to ſtop us at any time, and leaſt of all at this time; let us therefore proceed.

When we review the different ſorts of men as they preſent themſelves to us on the preſent occaſion, the firſt that occur are the Infidels of the age, who openly declare their unbelief. That the faith is not found in them, and that it never will be, needs no proving. Here the fact is as open as it is lamentable; and if we caſt our eye over Chriſtendom, we ſhall obſerve how they have increaſed of late years; perhaps there are ten for one, if the end of this century be compared with the beginning of it. The more we have of theſe in the earth, ſo much the leſs is faith found in it: and if we look forward, the proſpect is tremendous! Should the world go on to its appointed

appointed period (whatever that may be) and this *humour* ſhould prevail in the proportion it hath of late years, it ſeems as if no fleſh could be ſaved. But it is promiſed, for the ſake of God's elect, that the *days ſhall be ſhortened.* Matt. xxiv. 22. A few years ago, it ſeemed as if the infidel party truſted to ſcoffing and jeſting and pleaſantry, and meant no more than to *laugh* the Goſpel out of the world if they could. Theſe were the coruſcations of wit, which played in the air for a while, and pretended to be gentle and harmleſs; but they were ſoon changed into the thunders of perſecution, and followed by torrents of Chriſtian blood; inſomuch that it is probable the heathens, when they raged moſt furiouſly againſt the Goſpel, did never ſhed ſo much blood in ſo ſhort a time. If they have any friends in this country, they are found among perſons of the ſame claſs, actuated by the ſame ſpirit; men of no religion, or of a falſe religion, which is as bad as none, and ſometimes worſe. Theſe are the worſt members of ſociety amongſt us.

Next to theſe are the men of pleaſure, whoſe minds being wholly devoted to themſelves, they ſee nothing of God or of another

ther world. With them the preſent moment is all: and when pleaſure is the God, we can eaſily tell how he will be worſhipped. In the days of Faith and Piety, churches are ſeen to ariſe about a country, for the honour of God, and the practice of devotion: but in proportion as infidelity increaſes, it will be with us as with the Greeks and Romans; ſpectacles will be multiplied; theatres will ariſe, and outſhine the glories and ſplendors of religion *. There was a time, when the prieſt of the country pariſh was ſeen leading his people to public prayers in the middle of the week; in ſome places on every day; where now no ſuch prac-

* One of our poets, a profeſſed derider of faith, triumphs in this as a certain ſymptom of the decay of *ſuperſtition:* his words are too remarkable to be omitted:

In the good age of ghoſtly ignorance,
How did cathedrals riſe, and zeal advance!
But now that pious pageantry's no more,
And ſtages thrive as churches did before,

There never was a more ſevere ſatire upon the entertainments of the theatre; not excepting even the Book of *Jeremy Collier*, with all its wit and ſpirit. The author of theſe lines was ſuppoſed to be Dr. *Garth:* and they were preached (as a prologue) to a very numerous congregation.

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tice is ſeen or thought of. If faith is alive in the heart, it will as certainly pray, as a living body will certainly breathe. If Chriſtians do not pray ſo much in this age, as they uſed to do in the laſt; there is not ſo much faith amongſt them now as there was then *. And if we proceed from the ſtate of prayer, to the way of preaching and handling the Scripture; there again we are much degenerated; and all upon the ſame principle, the decay of faith. *We preach Chriſt crucified*, ſaid the Apoſtle: too many of his ſucceſſors, alas, might ſay, "*we do not preach Chriſt crucified*," we have more of the orator and the philoſopher than of the apoſtle, and have improved the obſolete Chriſtian Homily, into an Eſſay upon Virtue. How many there may be of this way I do not conjecture: may their number be much leſs than is apprehended! but in the beginning of the laſt century there were none. In expounding the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſta-

* An excellent diſcourſe on the daily ſervice of the Church of England, is diſtributed this year, as the annual preſent, by the Society for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge; occaſioned by the notorious decay of daily worſhip, particularly in cities and populous towns.

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ment, the decay of faith makes a great difference. It was the doctrine of St. Paul, in his charge to a Miniſter of the Goſpel, that the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament were able to make men *wiſe unto ſalvation, through* faith *which is in Chriſt Jeſus:* 2 Tim. iii. 15. conſequently, if they are interpreted without that faith, their nature is changed, and they no longer anſwer their deſign. The word of God, like man, for whom it was given, conſiſts of two parts, a body and a ſoul, called the Letter and the Spirit; the one the object of ſenſe, the other of faith; and as the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo is the Scripture a dead letter, unleſs we keep the ſpirit and interpretation of it. Inſtances might be given in abundance to ſhew my meaning; but let us be content with one.

The things which God did for our fathers, under Moſes, have a ſpiritual relation to us, and ſhewed what God would do for us under the Goſpel; and many excellent and neceſſary leſſons are thence to be drawn *. Thus, they were ſaved by water, when they paſſed the Red Sea; as we are ſaved by water in baptiſm. They were fed with manna, as

* See 1 Cor. x.

we are by that bread of life, which, like the manna, *came down from heaven!* They drank of miraculous waters from a rock, which rock, as St. Paul adds, was Chriſt, becauſe he gives to all his thirſting followers the waters of life: *let him come to me*, ſaid this rock himſelf, *and drink*. Of theſe and other like events, the plain hiſtory, as it was witneſſed by the Jews of old, is the Letter: the meaning, as it concerns us Chriſtians, is the Spirit; and the relation between the facts under Moſes and thoſe under Chriſt is ſo certain, that it is our duty to underſtand them, and to reaſon from the one to the other: and without ſo doing, we can have no proper ſenſe of the greatneſs of the diſpenſation we are under, ſo marked out by ſuch aſtoniſhing events ſo many ages ago. But without faith, to diſcern and embrace the ſpiritual things ſo delivered, the whole is loſt upon us: and therefore it is not wonderful that we ſee an infidel of noble birth abſolutely denying the likeneſs, and ſcoffing at the bleſſed Apoſtle, as a fanciful cabbaliſtical interpreter, who applies things to Chriſtianity, which had no more relation to it than to what was then doing in France. From this teaching of the Apoſtle, you

you ſee what the *ſpirit* of the Old Teſtament means; and in the example I have given, you ſee the blindneſs of infidelity: and the ſame blindneſs will be more or leſs in every perſon, who reads, or criticiſes, without the eye of faith: and in proportion as this way of interpreting is either diſliked or neglected, we may be certain there is a decay of faith in the ſame proportion. Here lies the grand diſtinction between a Jew and a Chriſtian: the Jew ſees nothing of Chriſtianity in the Old Teſtament, and rejects it with ſcorn when it is pointed out to him: the Chriſtian ſees it with admiration and conviction; and, if God has made him a *miniſter of the ſpirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. he teaches it to the people. If you underſtand what I have ſaid, your own experience will confirm the obſervation: if you do *not* underſtand it, then your want of underſtanding is a proof of what I have ſaid; that theſe things are not taught as they ſhould be among Chriſtians, and as they uſed to be formerly.

There is another remarkable inſtance, and that of great moment in theſe times, where the decay of faith is notorious. The Scripture teaches us that God governs the world

world, and that his *kingdom ruleth over all.* But this kingdom they only can *ſee,* who by faith *ſee him that is inviſible.* In our Liturgy, wherein we pray as Chriſtians, we frequently acknowledge this doctrine; the Scripture every where affirms it; but, in the world, what is become of it? Is it not almoſt univerſally forgotten or ſtigmatiſed? Are not principles publicly taught, and received, and boaſted of, as the wiſeſt in the world, which render this doctrine of the Scripture impertinent and impoſſible? In a neighbouring country thouſands have been inhumanly butchered for adhering to it. Yet is the doctrine as true as the Goſpel; and it is the only ſcheme that can be made ſenſe of: but when faith goes, this doctrine goes with it; and the lawleſs kingdom of darkneſs, in which there is nothing but diſcord, confuſion, and miſery, riſes up in the place of it. Many ſee and lament the confuſion; but how few are there who acknowledge the true cauſe of it! However, let us hope, that the preſent times have opened many eyes *. A dreadful leſſon hath

* See Mr. *Whitaker*'s publication on the *real Origin of Government*, lately printed and ſold by Mr. *Stockdale*, in *Piccadilly*. As this is the ſtrongeſt book of its ſize and

hath been given, to alarm and enlighten us: they that are not enlightened are plunged farther into darkneſs, and inflamed to greater rage and inſolence; which is the worſt of all misfortunes. They ſay it hurts government to maintain the doctrine of the Liturgy, and to preach as we pray: but, I ſay, *not:* it is the want of this doctrine that makes the people perfidious and turbulent, and puts government upon ſhifts and expedients, by which the people are ſufferers.

I have ſtated ſome effects, as they are too viſible amongſt us; and I hope nothing has been exaggerated. We are now to enquire into the cauſe: and here you may be ready to anſwer, that the facts explain themſelves; and that the want of faith is at the bottom of all the evils we complain of. But we muſt go a queſtion farther: how has it come to paſs, that we are thus wanting in the faith of our forefathers? The enemies of our faith are thoſe we renounce at our baptiſm, the world, the fleſh, and the devil. The world hath its vanities, its pomps and its pleaſures: the

date againſt all the Sophiſms and Subtilties of Republican Theoriſts, I muſt requeſt the Reader, if a Chriſtian, or willing to be ſuch, to give it a fair hearing.

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fleſh hath its paſſions; and the devil hath his devices. But theſe cauſes are too general: all ages have been expoſed to their influence; and the world in conſequence hath always been filled with vice and miſery. This doth ſhew us how the age differs from thoſe that were before it. Let us try then, if we cannot account for the change, as the infidels themſelves account for it: let us allow that it is the *age of reaſon*; that is, the age in which the *wiſdom of man* has been admitted as an authority againſt the *wiſdom of God*. How this has happened it may be difficult to ſay, though the fact cannot be denied. I queſtion very much whether I can trace the evil from the beginning: but I will give my own ſenſe of it, ſubmitting what I ſay to be corrected by thoſe who ſee farther than I do.

We all know how Chriſtianity was diſgraced by the folly, hypocriſy, and cruelty of fanatical men in the laſt century; who ſurfeited the wiſe with their cantings and abſurdities. To wipe away the reproach of which, it was thought good to produce a ſcheme of religion not capable of ſuch abuſes; more reaſonable in itſelf, and more worthy of philoſophers; a religion of human reaſon.

This is the plan adopted by our Deiſts, who profeſs a rule of life independent of Revelation: and ſo the facts of the Bible, with their conſequences, on which our whole religion is founded, are all rejected as no longer neceſſary. Chriſtianity is a ſcheme of facts; the other is a ſcheme of abſtract reaſoning. And, what is worſt of all, the plan which thus anſwers the purpoſes of infidelity, was not uſhered into the world by profligates and blaſphemers (for in that caſe Chriſtians would have ſtood upon their guard) but by perſons of learning and religious character: who by once admitting that nature can furniſh man with religion, have opened a door which will never be ſhut again. If nature is once allowed to be its own teacher, here is the fineſt opportunity in the world for throwing off all the obligations of Chriſtianity, and ſetting religion upon a new bottom. This is the uſe the Deiſts have made of it; and thus a religion from reaſon ſoon turns a man into an Infidel. But there is a middle generation of people, who would preſerve ſome decency and ſolemnity of character, between believers and infidels: theſe are your *rational Chriſtians* (as they call themſelves) who allow in Chriſtianity all that is agreeable to the religion of

reaſon,

reaſon, but nothing more: and when they have diveſted Chriſtianity of all that is Chriſtian, they wonder why there ſhould be any infidels; for that Chriſtianity is the moſt *reaſonable* thing in the world. To make it ſo, all the doctrines of faith are taken out of it: for nature knows not one of them. How can it reveal them to itſelf? It has no redemption from ſin, no gift of divine grace, no danger from the tempter, no prieſthood, no ſacraments; in a word, it has not one of thoſe things to which ſalvation is promiſed. It was never admitted into this country, till toward the latter end of the laſt century; ſince which the ſtrides of infidelity have been gigantic. And what can be done? We have admitted a worm to the root of the tree of life; and the withering of its top ſhould have convinced us long ago of our miſtake. Happy would it be, if, in theſe dangerous times, when many evils are come ſo near to maturity, men of learning and ability, whoſe deſigns are good, would be rouſed, before it be too late, to an impartial conſideration of this caſe, as I have laid it before you.

There is another cauſe which has bad effects, beſides this of a pretendedly—rational

religion, which has operated with much miſchief againſt the faith. When a man values himſelf upon his knowledge, he grows proud, and then he becomes weak. The knowledge of nature is a noble ſcience, and deſervedly holds a diſtinguiſhed rank in this kingdom. The contemplation of nature ſhould bring us nearer to God who framed it: but it ſeldom does; too often it has the contrary effect; and if we were to ſurvey, with more accuracy than is proper for a ſermon, the different claſſes of men, who have done moſt miſchief to religion, we ſhall find them chiefly among thoſe who take the name of *philoſophers*. They make diſcoveries on matter, or think they do (for there is great contradiction among them) till they ſee no ſuch thing as ſpirit; and ſo fall into *materialiſm*. It was an old and true accuſation, that the *world by wiſdom knew not God:* 1 Cor. i. 21. and the ſame is the great misfortune of man at this day. Thouſands are ſpoiled, not by philoſophy itſelf, but by the *vain deceit* of philoſophy. Tell a perſon of this ſort, inflated with his own importance, that in order to be *wiſe* he muſt become *a fool:* and what good can be expected? His monitor will be ſet down for the fool; and the madman may probably be added.

Some mathematicians, who ſee no farther than their own ſcience, can find certainty no where elſe: not diſtinguiſhing, that there is *natural* certainty and *moral* certainty; and that by far the greater part of what we know and receive, is, and muſt be, founded upon the evidence of *teſtimony*; and he that diſputes this kind of certainty hath as little *reaſon* in him as he that diſputes the other. Now, *if we receive the witneſs of men*, as we do every day, and neither knowledge nor buſineſs can go on without it, *the witneſs of God is greater*. 1 John v. 9. We call the evidence of teſtimony *moral* evidence; but in the caſe of religion, we can trace it up to *natural evidence*; that is, to the miraculous facts evident to the ſenſes of men, which were publicly given in confirmation of the word of God. But it doth by no means follow, that becauſe the evidence is natural and ſenſible, the doctrine proved thereby will be admitted. In multitudes of people it had not that effect: for inſtead of admitting the truth which they hated, they attempted to deſtroy the evidence; as in the caſe of the reſurrection of Lazarus, and the reſurrection of Chriſt himſelf. The wiſe men of Pharaoh's court were eye-witneſſes to the miraculous deeds of Moſes, but they were

not

not convinced. And the apoſtle hath forewarned us, that men of like character, the wiſe men of the laſt days, ſhould reſiſt the truth, as *Jannes* and *Jambres*, the magicians of Egypt, withſtood Moſes. He calls them men of *corrupt minds*, in a ſtate not fit for the reception of truth, and conſequently *reprobate concerning the faith*. The formal rejection of Chriſtianity by a nation of reprobates, who build every thing upon their philoſophy (materialiſm), and are as buſy in working natural wonders, and as conceited of what they do, as *Jannes* and *Jambres* were in the land of Egypt, is a melancholy demonſtration of what I have here ſaid, and ought to ſerve as a warning to the philoſophers of Britain.

I come now to the *uſe* of all that hath gone before; in which I muſt be brief.

The text gives us reaſon to expect, that at the coming of the Son of man, *faith* ſhall ſcarcely be *found on earth*. It is therefore obvious to conclude, that in proportion as the faith decays, the coming of Chriſt is drawing near. The ſcoffers of the laſt days may inſolently demand of us, as it was foretold they ſhould, *where is the promiſe of his coming*; and object

that

that there is no ſign of it, for that all things continue as they were: but this cannot now be ſaid with truth; all things do not continue as they were: there hath been a marvellous change of late in the affairs of this world, and in the ſtate of religion, with which all ſerious men are alarmed, juſtly apprehending that ſome ſtill greater event is to follow. The ſigns of the time, to thoſe who can read them, are many; and there is one which is but little noticed. When it is mentioned, ſome will be ready to tear their garments with rage, as if they had heard blaſphemy.

Before the firſt coming of Jeſus Chriſt, the world had been haraſſed, plundered and deſtroyed for many years by a nation of *Republicans*; enthuſiaſts for *liberty* at home, but ſubjecting all nations in their progreſs to robbery and ſlavery: who, like wolves, by nature quarrelſome and ravenous, were banded together to make a prey of mankind. This was the ſtate of the world before the firſt advent of Chriſt, and with his appearance it ended. In the ways of Providence there is an uniformity of conduct; and though we muſt not preſume, where we have no poſitive direction to guide us, yet is it a very ſtrange incident, that when the ſecond

coming of Chriſt is expected, the moſt powerful nation in Europe (for ſuch they are) and the moſt monarchical (for ſuch they were) ſhould turn into the moſt ſavage and ravenous republicans, and form a plan, as the Romans did, of invading, overturning and plundering all other nations; *this nation* in particular, if it ſhould ever be in their power, above all the reſt. How this began, we can tell: how it will proceed, and by what farther ſteps, God only knows: but this we are ſure of, that however long it may laſt, it muſt ceaſe with the coming and kingdom of Chriſt. In the interval, they may rejoice and be as merry as Ahab was, when he had ſeized upon the property of the murdered Naboth: but the fearful queſtion will come at laſt, *haſt thou killed and alſo taken poſſeſſion?* 1 Kings xxi. 19. Then ſhall rebellion, and blood-guiltineſs, and blaſphemy, call upon the mountains to hide them from Him, who will then manifeſt himſelf in the two characters, at preſent the objects of their peculiar hatred and contempt—a *Prieſt* and a *King*. It may be admired as a great exploit, that Chriſtianity, with all its reſtraints, is driven out: but the world may be aſſured, this will be no peaceable event. The *faith*, planted through-

throughout the earth, will never be rooted out without a tremendous ſhock. When the founder of our religion expired, the earth trembled, the ſun was darkened, and all nature felt the ſtroke; and if his faith is to expire, the cataſtrophe will ſhake the world: a circumſtance often ſpoken of in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Teſtament, as preparatory to the great day of the Lord. How much the earth is moved at this time, we feel every day: how much more it may be before the end cometh, it is not for us to judge: but this we know, that all the commotions of the earth will terminate in the fulfilling of the promiſes of God, when we ſhall receive a *kingdom which cannot be moved* *.

It is either weak and childiſh, or wicked and profane, to conſider this as a frightful ſubject. We learn many things to prepare us for the part we are to take in this world; but we learn Chriſtianity to prepare us for that other world which it hath promiſed: and ſhall we be afraid to hear it is at hand? Shall

* Heb. xii. 28. See alſo Hagg. ii. 7.

we

we pray daily that the kingdom of God may come; and ſhall we wiſh at the ſame time it may not come? Is not death the end of this world to every man; and is there any man who thinks he ſhall never ſee it? Does it come the ſooner, becauſe we preach about it? We may make people ſerious; and that may make them ſober; and ſo they may live the longer; and then death will come the later. So in the other caſe; the Lord, in his time, muſt be revealed from heaven, with every circumſtance of majeſty and terror: *he that ſhall come will come*, and he will come in this manner. If we preach about it, we may make men wiſer; and that will make the event leſs terrible; and we ſhall thereby do them the greateſt kindneſs in the world. If any man can be brought to ſuch a ſtate of mind, as to hope for and deſire that great event, which all the powers of earth and hell can never prevent; then he is a happy man indeed; and not before. Let us therefore all devoutly pray, that when we are told of the Lord's coming, our hearts may be ready to anſwer—*Amen*; *even ſo, come Lord Jeſus.*

FINIS.